

Good Marketing Practices

Display hints

How you present your product can have a big impact on the price you get for your product. Remember that while you are at the market you are selling your product every minute. Here are some tips on increasing your sales at the market:

- Keep your display **piled high**. When a basket starts to get empty, use a filler in the bottom of the basket to elevate the product.
- Use **color contrast** on the table. For example, put a green product next to a red one.
- Use **informative signs**. Include price and some information about the use of the product or why your product is different from others like it.
- Try to **add height** to your display by making shelves on the back of your table and covering it all with an attractive tablecloth.
- Have a sign with your **farm name** and location featured prominently.
- Display only **top quality**. Inferior product should be marked and priced as such.
- If applicable, mark product that is eligible for the **FMNP programs** to make selection easy for program participants.

Good salesmanship

You lose customers with poor service. Sixty-four percent of customers who stopped shopping with a vendor did so because they felt he or she had an attitude of indifference. Customers are valuable; treat them that way.

- Show hustle and enthusiasm.
- Greet each and every person who looks your way.
- Learn and use your customers' names, especially children.
- Pass out recipes.
- Answer questions eagerly. Know how to cook with your products.
- Know your products and varieties well.
- Give extra attention to the kids.
- Have a money-back guarantee, and smile when you have to honor it.
- Don't smoke over your product.

Market location and layout

A good market location is vital to the strength of the market. Though most markets have to settle for the location they can get, some effort should be made to consider the pros and cons of the proposed location and keep looking if a location is not acceptable.

When deciding how your market should lay out, think customer flow for every vendor. Vendors on the end of a long, straight line usually get fewer customers.

Market location and layout (cont.)

Arrange tables in a U-pattern or other creative way to get customers past every table. This helps customers shop the entire market and gives each vendor the chance to reach all customers.

Safety is one of the most important considerations when laying out a market. Customers should not be driving past the booths in the same area where the customers are shopping. Car traffic should be directed away from the booths. Drivers are usually distracted by looking at what is offered at each booth and may not see loose children or those focused on shopping. Shoppers will be looking at the offerings and not for cars. These combine to make a very dangerous situation at your market with potential for someone to get hit. Use barricades to keep cars out of the shopping area and strictly enforce this.

Consider **parking** for the market. It needs to be conveniently as well as safely located. Be careful when locating parking across a busy street from the market. If it must be across a street, try to locate it near a marked crosswalk. The parking should be well-marked with obvious signs to avoid confusion.

Also consider what your market looks like to those driving by and evaluating whether the market is appealing. Ask yourself: Does the market look like there is enough variety and activity to “make it worth” stopping by? If not, make efforts to lure in more vendors with a wider variety of products. Encourage community groups to set up at the market to bring more activity to the market.

Not only are restrooms a great asset for the vendors at the market, they may be required if any vendor wants to offer commercially prepared products, including meats. A vendor must have a retail permit from the health department to sell these items, and one of the requirements is a restroom. These can be portables with a hand washing option.

Some other points to consider are:

- Good drainage
- Flat even surface for older customers and those with strollers
- Easy access from both directions
- Visibility from main road. Many shoppers stop at a market for the first time on impulse.
- Access to electricity and/or water
- Room for expansion and community involvement

Events

Events need not be large, expensive affairs. Look to members of your community to see if you can partner with other organizations trying to reach people. Your local health department and County Extension office are frequently reaching out to community members with initiatives that may mesh well with good, wholesome food. Farmland preservation groups, agriculture organizations, and local economic development offices might want to sponsor an activity or an educational event to reach our customers.

Events (cont.)

Other community organizations, such as the Girl Scouts or Boy Scouts may be willing to demonstrate some of their skills or sell cookies at the market. Local arts groups may partner with the market to offer special craft days featuring local artisans. Agro-Art competitions are very popular out west. These competitions bring artists to the market and create photo opportunities for the local press.

Probably one of the best events at farmers' markets is featuring local chefs from area restaurants. Sales go up when a chef offers tastes of recipes made with product available at the market. Some markets even mark the booths that have the ingredients for the recipe with brightly colored balloons to make the ingredients easy for customers to find. More information about holding one of these events is outlined elsewhere in this manual.